

Amra

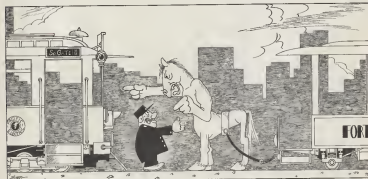


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Contents of Amra v2 #64 for October 1975:

- 01 - Coverillo by Ray Garcia Capella
- 02 - Contents, with Street Railway Centaur illo by Marc Schirmeister
- 03 - Thuds, logo by Xerox, editorial material by the innumerable editorial horde
- 04 - More Claymores, illo by Tim Kirk, article by Jerry Pournelle
- 05 - Cold Steel, Eyeball to Eyeball; illos by Roy G Krenkel, Harry Douthwaite, & Roy G Krenkel; article by Harry Douthwaite
- 06 - Some Swackles; letters
 - On Lovecraft & Price by Harry Warner Jr
- 09 - On FAR LANDS OTHER DAYS by Karl Edward Wagner
 - On Justice Delayed by L Sprague de Camp
 - On Zelazny's Series by John Malan
- 09 - Limericks, illo by Roy G Krenkel, both by John Boardman
- 10 - Three Kings, illos by Roy G Krenkel, poem by Poul Anderson
- 14 - Tars Yarkas & I, illo by Marc Schirmeister, poem by L Sprague de Camp
- 15 - Hexapodal Origin, comment by Jean A Sharland
- 15 - The Ballad of Yang the Nauseating, illo by Tim Kirk, song by Robert Coulson
- 16 - Goric & Other Limericks, illo by Gray Morrow, limericks by Stuart Shiffman & John Boardman
- 17 - Amra v2#61p26, by John Brunner
- 17 - Smalllimericks, illo by Ray Garcia Capella, limericks by Ruth Berman
- 18 - Dax the Damned, A Review; illo by Esteban Maroto, review by Seth Glick
- 19 - Scrolls: LOVECRAFT AT LAST, RADNOR OF ANCIENT GPAN, WANDOR'S JOURNEY, and KYRIK: WARLOCK, WARRIOR, reviews by L Sprague de Camp
- 20 - Blunders, illo by Stuart Shiffman, more editorial from the swarming staff

Backishinfo: one to nine copies, 75¢ each; ten or more, 70¢ each; except that the reprints of v2#1, #2, and #3 are \$1 each. We have stock of v2#46 through #64; we have very few copies of #31, #33, #39, and #44 on hand; if you order any of these last four, send along a self-addressed (not stamped) envelope so we can send money back if we must.



Thuds

by the editorial horde, n+3 strong!!

We shall begin by calling attention to *Anduril Sword & Sorcery* number 5, available from John Martin of 101 Eskdale, Tanhouse 5, Skelmersdale [we are not making this address up!!!], Lancs WN8 6EB England for 30p or US\$1 per copy or 90p -- US\$3 -- for a sub of three ish. It is Amsa-sized, 7 inches by 10, saddlestitched as we are, only longer -- 36 pages and about 2.337271751 times the wordage. Notable items this time are an article on clothing one's heroic heroes, heroines, villainesses, & villains; a review of *A QUEST FOR SYMBELIS*, a highly recommended novel by Michael Shea, set (with permission) in the setting of Jack Vance's *DYING EARTH*; two of the very few pieces of good amateur fantasy fiction we've seen; and a review of a story series by our own esteemable ArchAgent. In addition to being properly Amsa-sized, *Anduril* is equally as erratic as to schedule. If you can stand us, you'll be pleased with this.

We continue by calling attention to Don Grant's latest pair: *TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT*, containing the story of the same name and "The God in the Bowl", both illustrated, in color -- a total of 9 paintings -- by Robert Richardson; and *A WITCH SHALL BE BORN*, illustrated by Alicia Austin with four color plates and six line drawings. Both volumes are printed and bound superbly; they form a matching set with *THE PEOPLE OF THE BLACK CIRCLE*, which Grant brought out last year, and with the rest of the purely Howardian Conan stories yet to come. The price is high: \$15 a volume, but the quality of the product makes it worth it. Don Grant is at West Kingston RI 02892.

We go on -- perhaps Too Far -- by expressing our growing concern over the copyright statements in various amateur and professional publications which publish material by Robert E Howard. Some have been failing to quote the original copyright correctly; virtually all have been quoting the current copyright, not on behalf of the Howard estate or the heirs to that estate, but in the name of the literary agent, who is none of these. It is not customary for an agent to take out a copyright in his name rather than in that of his principal; among other reasons, and even with the best intentions on the part of all concerned, should the agent become incapacitated unexpectedly, his principals will be placed in a very difficult position indeed.

We report that the Hyborean Legion badge is once more available from Manny Staub, of 5520 Sherrier St NW, Washington DC 20006. Since stock is limited, you must send him a stamped, self-addressed postcard so that he can tell you whether to send money and how much.

We also report that the bankruptcy of Lancer Books has caused a great many legal and financial problems with the continuation of the Conan paper-backed book series. Book publication of *CONAN OF AQUILONIA* awaits the resolution of those problems. Rumors of settlement with a new publisher are, at this moment, still just rumors.

We might take this time to review a little nomenclature and like that: Amsa (the fame that you are holding right this minute) is named after Amsa, a pseudonym that Conan the Cimmerian used while he was a pirate in various of his less law-abiding adventures. The Hyborean Legion (RHH wasn't consistent in his spelling either) is a very loose organization of people who are interested in the kind of things this magazine is about. The Legion is too loose and unruly even to have a membership list, but we do meet at most World Science Fiction Conventions. The Terminus, Owlswick, & Ft Mudge Electric Street Railway Gazette has been our publisher since v2#15. Ft Mudge, we knew all along to be real (as well as in the great comic strip Pogo), being where US 1 crosses the Okefenokee Swamp, SE of Waycross GA. Terminus was taken from Asimov's *FOUNDATION*; and Owlswick, from Edision's *WORM OURBOROS*, cited therein as the place from which the troops did not come. We've recently been shocked and delighted to find that these two places also exist on this earth as well, and we plan a small supplement on the matter as soon as some more documentation has been assembled.

And finally, we remind you all: keep your axes sharp & divvy up the loot afterwards!

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COMPLETE INFORMATION

MORE CLAYMORES

by JERRY POURNELLE

At various times in these annals, I have written of swords and armor and somehow became involved in a senseless argument regarding what article of combat may properly be called a "claymore". To be precise, I have contended (correctly) that the great basket-hilted broadsword characteristic of Highlanders in the 17th and 18th Centuries is properly called a "claymore" and (incorrectly) that this weapon is the only one properly so called.

Let us now examine the evidence. First, the original and classic Highland weapon appears to have been a two-handed broadsword, generally carried across the back in transit, and usually called by a Gaelic name similar to "cullach d' more", "cullachmore", or other guttural which is difficult to transliterate. These swords were carried by Highlanders after the balance of the Scots gave them up for single-hand basket-hilt broadswords which could be used in conjunction with a target.

I'm unable to find out precisely when this basket-hilted broadsword became the Highland weapon of choice, but it is certainly before the time of Montrose and the "Year of Miracles", for Montrose speaks of leading "2000 claymores" against the Covenanters at Tippermuir, which was, incidentally, the last victory of sword and battleaxe against a European army. Thus, to the Duke of Montrose at least, "claymore" was a proper term to apply to the single-edge basket-hilt broadsword.

Sir Walter Scott, writing of the campaigns of John Graeme of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, again speaks of "Highland claymores"; and the weapon at Killiecrankie was definitely a single-handed sword, not a two-handed broadsword. The battle was decided by the claymores. The Scots closed with their enemy, endured a volley, fired off their own muskets, and threw them away, to fall upon the enemy with broadsword. As Macaulay states:

The immediate cause of the late defeat [of the English under Mackay] was the difficulty of fixing bayonets. The firelock of the Highlander was quite distinct from the weapon which he used in close fight. He discharged his shot, threw away his gun, and fell on with his sword. This was the work of a moment. It took the regular musketeer two or three minutes to alter his missile weapon into a weapon with which he could encounter an enemy hand to hand; and during those two or three minutes the event of Killiecrankie had been decided. Mackay therefore [invented the ring bayonet which could be attached without rendering the musket incapable of firing].

Macaulay throughout speaks of the "claymores" of the Highlanders.

As my final bit of evidence, I produce a song contemporary with the rising of the '45, at which the Highlanders definitely employed single-edge basket-hilted one-hand broadswords:

What's a' the steor, Kinner?
What's a' the steor?
Charlie he is landed, and haith! he'll soon
be here;
The wind was at his back, Carle, the wind was
at his back;
I carena, sin' he's come, Carle, we were na
worth a plack.
I'm glad to hear't, Kinner,
I'm glad to hear't.
I hae a guid braid claymore, and for his sake
I'll wear't;
Sin Charlie he is landed, we hae nae mair
to fear,
Sin Charlie he is come, Kinner, we'll hae a
jubilee year!

Now, I make no doubt that in the transition period when the two-handed broadsword was still employed but Gaelic was changing into dialects and broad Scots, the term "claymore" came into being as a corruption of the Gaelic; yet, I suspect, the Highlanders did not employ it often, preferring to use the original terminology. Many Highlanders to



this day speak Oxonian English and Gaelic, but have little trace of the Broad Scots dialect [the OED defines "Scots" as the Lowlands dialect]; ywis, Broad Scots is detested in parts of the Highlands. Yet the term claymore seems to be used, referring to the weapon worn today on dress occasions -- the basket-hilt sword. By the time "claymore" became a common word in the Highlands, I suspect but cannot prove, so had the single-hand weapon.

In any event, I drop any claim that "claymore" cannot properly refer to the two-handed double-edged weapon worn across the back; but I insist that it is properly applied to the basket-hilt weapon as well; and I repeat my claim, itself not disputed in these annals, that the Highlander trained from early youth to use the great basket-hilted single-edge weapon was a formidable a sword-armed opponent as has ever existed on this Earth.

COLD STEEL eyeball to eyeball

by HARRY DOUTHWAITE

The vigorous use of cold steel was a bloody business, as everyone who's read his CONAN will know. Just how grim close combat with primitive weapons was, I, for one, didn't fully realize until I read the memoirs of a Scots sergeant who fought through the Indian Mutiny in the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders (*REMINISCENCES OF THE GREAT MUTINY* by Sergeant William Forbes-Mitchell, 1893).

There are several descriptions of close-quarter fighting in the book which may interest fellow Hyboreans, for the Mutiny was probably the last major conflict in which such combats took place. Subsequent encounters with "barbarian" foes saw the rapid decline of hand-to-hand combat, as first breech-loading and then magazine-loading rifles (not to mention Gatling guns) tipped the scales decidedly against the character wielding sword and spear.

During the Mutiny of 1857 neither side enjoyed a firepower advantage, both being armed with clumsy, muzzle-loading muskets and rifles. After an initial exchange of shots there was nothing for it but to close and settle the issue in the old-fashioned way -- with bayonets, swords and shields, daggers, hatchets, and bows and arrows.

Two facts which should interest writers of sword and sorcery fiction, and the Society for Creative Anachronism, emerge from the following accounts of close-quarter fighting:

1. The rifle and bayonet (which is in effect a pike) is superior to the sword, dagger, or hatchet when handled by a man who knows his business.

2. Skill at arms is not necessarily the decisive factor in hand-to-hand fighting. In a real fight, a very angry man may well beat a more skilful opponent who is too scared, when it comes to the crunch, to use his skill. That might sound implausible in a yarn, but in real battle such things happened.

Here Forbes-Mitchell describes the best way for men armed with pikes to take on superior numbers armed with pikes or swords: "Sir Colin again addressed the men, telling us that there was heavy work before us, and that we must hold well together, and as much as possible keep in threes, and that as soon as we stormed a position we were to use the bayonet. The centre man of each group of three was to make the attack, and the other two to come to his assistance with their bayonets right and left. We were not to fire a single bullet even after we got inside a position, unless we were certain of hitting our enemy, for fear of wounding our own men. To use the bayonet with effect we were ordered, as I say, to group in threes and mutually assist each other, for by such action we would soon bayonet the enemy down although they might be ten to one; which as a matter of fact they were. It was by strictly following this advice and keeping cool and mutually assisting each other that the bayonet was used with such terrible effect inside the Secundrabagh."

I wonder how Conan would have fared against a trio of handy pikemen? The Indian mutineers apparently knew of only one counter to this use of the rifle and bayonet: "... they fought like devils. In addition to their muskets, all the men in the Secundra-bagh were armed with swords from the King of Oudh's magazines, and the native tulwars were as sharp as razors. When they had fired their muskets, they hurled them amongst us like javelins, bayonets first, and then drawing their tulwars, rushed madly on to their destruction, slashing in blind fury with their swords and using them as one sees sticks used



in the sham fights on the last night of the Muharram. As they rushed on us shouting 'Din! Din!' they actually threw themselves under the bayonets and slashed at our legs. It was owing to this fact that more than half of our wounded were injured by sword-cuts."

Here is an illustration of the effect that angry men may have on their opponents: "Before the command could be repeated or the buglers had time to sound the advance, the whole seven companies, like one man, leaped over the wall, with such a yell of pent-up rage as I had never heard before or since. It was not a cheer, but a concentrated yell of rage and ferocity that made the echoes ring; and it must have struck terror into the defenders, for they actually ceased firing, and we could see them through the breach rushing from the outside wall to take shelter..."

Here is an even more dramatic example: "When the signal for the assault was given, Quaker Wallace went into the Secundrabagh like one of the Furies, if there are male Furies, plainly seeking death but not meeting it, and quoting the 116th Psalm, Scotch version in metre, beginning at the first verse. ... It was generally reported in the company that Quaker Wallace single-handed killed twenty men, and one wonders at this, remembering that he took no comrade with him and did not follow Sir Colin's rule of 'fighting in threes',

but whenever he saw an enemy he went for him. I may here remark that the case of Wallace proved that, in a fight like the Secundrabagh where the enemy is met hand to hand and foot to foot, the way to escape death is to brave it. Of course Wallace might have been shot from a distance, and in that respect he only ran an even chance with the others; but wherever he rushed with his bayonet, the enemy did their utmost to give him a wide berth."

Remember that Quaker Wallace's opponents were, theoretically, no push-over. In addition to their native skill at arms they'd received the same thorough British army training as had Wallace.

Sergeant Forbes-Mitchell and his Highlanders found themselves at the sharp end not only of bayonets, swords, daggers, and hatchets; but of arrows too! This is what that was like: "In the force defending the Shah Najaf, in addition to the regular army, there was a large body of archers on the walls, armed with bows and arrows which they discharged with great force and precision, and on White raising his head above the wall an arrow was shot right into his feather bonnet. ... he raised his feather bonnet on the point of his bayonet above the top of the wall, and immediately another arrow pierced it through, while a dozen more whizzed past a little wide of the mark.

"Just then one poor fellow of the Ninety-Third, named Penny, of Number 2 company, raising his head for an instant a little above the wall, got an arrow right through his brain, the shaft projecting more than a foot out at the back of his head. ... One unfortunate man of the regiment, named Montgomery, of Number 6 company, exposed himself a little too long to watch the effect of our volley, and before he could get down into shelter again an arrow was sent right through his heart, passing clean through his body and falling on the ground a few yards behind him. He leaped about six feet straight up in the air, and fell stone dead."

The effect of such fighting on the nerves of men who'd survived the horrors of the Crimean War -- really hard professional soldiers -- surprised me, and the following passage will probably surprise anyone else who's familiar only with fictional accounts of old-time hand-to-hand combat: "... I lay and listened to the men sleeping around me; and

what a night that was. Had I the descriptive powers of a Tennyson or a Scott I might draw a picture of it, but as it is I can only very faintly attempt to make my readers imagine what it was like. The horrible scenes through which the men had passed during the day had told with terrible effect on their nervous systems, and the struggles -- eye to eye, foot to foot, and steel to steel -- with death in the Secundrabagh, were fought over again by most of the men in their sleep, oaths and shouts of defiance often curiously intermingled with prayers. One man would be lying calmly sleeping

and commence muttering something inaudible, and then break out into a fierce battle-cry of 'Cawnpore, you bloody murderers!'; and another would shout 'Charge! Give them the bayonet!'; and a third, 'Keep together, boys, don't fire, forward, forward!' Then I would hear one muttering, 'Oh, mother, forgive me, and I'll never leave you again!'; while his comrade would half rise up, wave his hand, and call, 'There they are! Fire low, give them the bayonet! Remember Cawnpore!' ... Verily that night convinced me that Campbell's *SOLDIER'S DREAM* is no mere fiction, but must have been written or dictated from actual experience by one who had passed through such another day as that of the 16th of November, 1857."

SOME SWACKLES

ON LOVECRAFT & PRICE

by Harry Warner, Jr

I'm sorry to see the review of Lovecraft biography reverting to the old, largely abandoned clichés about Lovecraft's failures as a man and as an author. So HPL didn't finish high school; neither did perhaps nine out of every ten kids in the first years of this century. His marriage blew up, just as one-third of all marriages do today. He didn't make a whole lot of money out of his fiction, and do you know what would have happened if he had succeeded in gaining a fair income from it? Everyone would have pointed to Lovecraft as the model for the hero in Barry Malzberg's *NEROVIT'S WORLD*. For that matter, if Lovecraft had died professor of ancient history at Brown in 1965, he would have been almost as hard up financially during his youth and middle years; there wasn't much more money for college teachers in those years than there was for people who sold most of their fiction to *Weird Tales*. Lovecraft lived the way he preferred to live. I don't think he would have died happier if he had been persuaded by the SPWA to keep submitting his rejected manuscripts.

E Hoffman Price made the events of four decades ago seem startlingly clear and alive to the reader. The things that he leaves unsaid also help the impact of the episodes involving Howard himself and his parents. But while I was reading this, I couldn't help thinking about another matter altogether: the near-total neglect of Price himself as a topic for long articles and bibliographic endeavors and reprints in fanzines and books. Why can't that sort of thing begin while the subject is still available to answer questions, give suggestions, and enjoy the egoboo of awakened interest in his writings? I don't suppose Price will ever be the subject of a cult like those that have sprung up for such as HPL, CAS, and REH. But less important writers and less colorful personalities are being resurrected today for no reason other than someone's urge to become a discoverer.

423 Summit Av, Hagerstown MD 21740



... the Price volume looks to be quite a tone -- bigger even than Arkham's *HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND*, and nearly twice the size of *WORSE THINGS WAITING*. Needless to say, I expect the price to zoom on publication, depending mostly on paper costs. So if you want one, or know anyone who might . . . Ed's foreword is wild -- going to shock a lot of old maids with his whorehouse reminiscences, and shock a lot of fans with his account of what writing for a living was like. Lots of fun in this one.

... Got the whole Carcosa crowd running about the house tonight, addressing, stuffing, licking*, etc. Looks like a cross between a Marx Brothers opus and a witches' sabbat.

*** % Carcosa, Box 1064, Chapel Hill NC 27514

[* Envelopes; what else?]

ON JUSTICE DELAYED by L Soradue de Camp

Ochone! 'Tis an injustice to me long-dead collaborator Two-Gun Howard, that I'm after committing. In my review of his *ECHOES FROM AN IRON MARE*, I remarked that his poem "The Sea" was not, so far as I knew, based on ever having been to sea himself. Now I find that, in his letter to Lovecraft of September, 1930, he told of having once taken a motorboat ride in the Gulf of Mexico, which is quite big and rough enough to qualify as a sea. (I know.) So I'm hoping he'll not be haunting me.

*** 278 Hothorpe Ln, Villanova PA 19085

ON ZELAZNY'S SERIES by John Maler

Just a note to let you know (if 150 people haven't already [149, but who's counting]) that the first two books in Zelazny's Corwin of Amber series are *NINE PRINCES IN AMBER* and *GUNS OF AVALON* -- not *TO DIE IN ITALBAR* as you stated in the latest issue. *TO DIE IN ITALBAR* is the second in his SF series concerning Francis Sandon and the Pei'an "religion". (The first in that series is *TWO ISLES OF THE DEAD*.) [All of which shows how far we have gotten behind in our Required Reading; our apologies to any misled.]

Here's hoping *UNICORN* hits the paperback stalls soon. The stretches between new Zelaznys are long enough as it is -- almost as long as between Avram Davidsons or Leibers. (Is there any Newthorpe stuff within hailing distance??) That's the price of quality, I expect.

*** % Chatham Arts, 12 Commerce St, Chatham NJ 07925

LIMERICKS both by JOHN BOEDFORD

No matter your lust or hysteria,
You shouldn't try raping Valeria;
She'll cut out your viscera
Like Jael did to Sisera,
Unless, of course, you're from Cismeria.

"Ophir is a festering blister,
And I'll fall on their land like a twister,"
And Conn with his horde
Put the land to sword,
And unknowingly raped his half-sister.





P.O.L. ANDERSON
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P.O.L. ANDERSON

THREE KINGS

Three kings rode out on the road to Hell,
And ravens flew on the gale.
The night wind rang like an iron bell,
And hissed with sleet and hail.
Three kings rode out where the night wind runs,
And on, to Death's highway:
The king of the Britons, the king of the Huns,
And the king of Norrøway.

The king of the Britons was crowned with gold,
And rode on a stallion white.
"Oh, all men gang when they are told,
But I go not in fright.
A goodly king who loved his folk;
And guarded them with the rod,
With stake and gallows against themselves,
Will surely go to God."

The king of the Huns was capped with steel,
And rode a stallion red.
"Oh, truly proud my fathers feel,
Of me who crowned my head,
Halfway around a world in pain,
Which I did mightily win;
And I go home to my fathers' fane,
And not to the evil Djinn."

And the king of Norway was helmed with wings,
And rode a stallion gray.
"Oh, fiercely glad my heart now sings;
Odin guests me today.
I died in bed; I vowed I hung
Full many a screaming thrall,
On Odin's tree, with runes on tongue.
I go now to his hall."





Three kings rode down to the depths of Hell;
And the bloody-breasted hound
Howled as they rode into black halls fell,
Icy beneath the ground.
Three kings a fine old judgment won
From the high gods' lips that day:
The Devil took the Briton, the Djinni took the Hun,
And Hel took Norrøway!

#

TARS TARKAS & I

by L SPRAGUE de CAMP

© 1975

by L SPRAGUE de CAMP



Had I the extra limbs Tars Tarkas flaunts,
Which are between his arms and legs deployed
And can as either member be employed,
Whene'er the noble Martian giant wants,
I'm sure it would be nice.

No longer should I stumble on the stair
While with a massive tray of dishes fraught
Or to a painful overthrow be brought
By treading on the sidewalk, unaware,
Upon a patch of ice.

At music, I could be a one-man band.
I'd deftly in a turnstile drop my fare
While toting an umbrella and a pair
Of bags; and all those thumbs were grand
For tying knots in twine.

But if I had Tars Tarkas's pea-green hide,
His jutting fangs, wall eyes, and monstrous mass,
I fear no longer would my chosen lass
My true love be. So I am satisfied
With this old shape of mine.

HEXAPODAL ORIGIN

by Mr Jean A Sharland

In the October, 1974, issue of *Smithsonian* I came across an article which may shed some light on the evolution of animal life on Barsoom. This article, "Exotic Bestiary for Vicarious Space Voyagers", by Bonnie Dalzell, in an excellently reasoned paragraph, points out that the land-dwelling animals of Jasoom had fishlike predecessors who were of the free-swimming, open-ocean type. These free-swimmers had only two sets of diving planes; thus, when they evolved into land dwellers they developed four legs. The article then asserts that on planets with very little water, where the seas and lakes are shallow and perhaps even seasonal, the land animals would have developed directly from the bottom-crawling, multilimbed fish.

This second evolutionary track seems to fit Barsoom exactly. The green men of Barsoom undoubtedly evolved from hexopods. That would mean that the green men are the true indigenes of the planet and that the red, white, black, and yellow humans are intruders who originated on a more aqueous planet. #####

The BALLAD of YANG the NAUSEATING

to the tune: ABDUL THE BULBUL AMER

by Robert COULSON

*Now, all the SCA members are fearless and bold,
And used to the tournament's clang.
But of all of these hearties the toughest by far
is the one whose cognomen is Yang.*

*He can hew you in two with a broadsword, or else
Slit your gizzard before you can stir.
And when you are dead he'll compose a new song,
telling what a fine fellow you were.*

*Peaceloving Mongolians all flock to Yang's gang,
As he leads swiftly to the attack;
Though I often have wondered how swiftly you go,
When you're riding a ten-year-old yak.*

*The maidens who savor the spices
of love,
Of which troubadors gaily sang,
All agree that the ultimate flavor
of love,
Is known as the Yang gang
bang tang.*

#####



ARMoured
CAVALRY,
TANG
DYNASTY
(CHINA, C.700)



GORIC & Other LIMERICKS

*I think that tarsman of Gor
Has become a terrible bore!
For foolish Tari Cabot
Has a terrible habit:
Repeating the same plots once more!*

-- by Stu Shiffman

There once was a knight named Orlando
 Who fought like a Wayne or a Brando;
 But a rascally Baegue
 In a mask broke his casque,
 And he fell down a mountain glissando.
 --- John Boardman

Rinaldo's young daughter, Nefriti
 Harasses Tarantia City:
 She paints daddy's tunes
 In old Kothic runes
 Upon all the walls as graffiti.
 --- John Boardman

When that Conan first got out his sword,
 I said to myself then, "O Lord!"
 With his skill as a killer
 And raper -- a thriller!
 I certainly wouldn't be bored.
 --- Stu Shiffman

The great-great-great-grandson of Dain
 Is cursing the dwarves in his mine:
 They now form a cell
 In the A F of L,
 And aren't coming in until nine.
 --- John Boardman

Amra v2n64p26:

by JOHN BRUNNER

We Britons have recently seen,
 on telly, The Weather Machine:
 two hours about climate
 explaining it's time it
 turned icy in Europe. The dean
 of fantasy writers, de Camp,
 says Britain was misty and damp
 when the Picts were about.
 Well, it's time he found out
 that a Pict had small need for a gamp!
 ####

SmallLimericks

by RUTH BERMAN

"I'm illiterate," said Hop o' my thumb;
 "No, it is not that I'm dumb;
 But if you must teach
 From books out of my reach,
 To your libraries I will not come."

Poor Kleinzach could just stand there and gape;
 His intentions had been carnal rape,
 But if when you sin
 She can't feel it go in,
 Your desires (and their object) escape.

A little girl named Alice Liddell
 Found growing a curious riddle:
 "Big or small would be fine,
 But up/down like a wine
 Wave keeps leaving me caught in the middle."

"... one of Tim Kirk's illos to "When Ganders
 Last in the Barnyard Honk'd demanded being
 illustrated itself."

Thumbelina said, "Froggies and moles,
 Though they may have quite beautiful souls,
 Are not to my taste;
 I'd be sooner asbraced
 By the man who sold rope to the gnomes."

"Keep in mind," Horton said, "after all,
 A person's a person, though small;
 If an elephant's wise,
 It is not from his size,
 But from listening to all who may call."



DAX the DAMNED



A REVIEW

by SETH GLICK *illo* ©1974 by the
Warren Publishing Co

Dax, a refreshingly unique S&S protagonist written and drawn by Esteban Maroto, appeared as a continuing feature in *Serie* magazine. Finally, all of the tales were collected and arranged chronologically in *Serie* #59 [available at \$1.99, postpaid, from Captain Company [[Warren Publishing Company's backlist department]], Box 450 Murray Hill Station, New York NY 10016]. However, they are loosely woven, with no discernable connection between episodes save the omnipresent theme of the powerful Dax being helplessly manipulated by the cruel gods as if he were nothing more than a varicomette.

Dax drifts from one adventure to the next, battling assorted monsters, witches, and demons, all the while savoring the pleasures of countless breathtaking, desirable women. He is invincible in situations requiring physical prowess and yet persistently frustrated in his efforts to prevent himself from being the unwitting catalyst in chains of events which result in the suffering and destruction of all who are emotionally significant to him. This is a curse similar to that bestowed upon Michael Moorcock's Elric, except that the latter is eventually released from his torment by death.

Dax, on the other hand, is denied even this blessing. Instead, the ultimate irony occurs in the concluding story as Dax's spirit is presented with the choice of life or death. In spite of the awesome burden of futility which has been his destiny, he selects life, unaware that the life to which he returns is on a battle-field, where he lies completely paralyzed by a severed spinal cord.

Why Dax is singled out by the gods to endure their wrath is never specifically elucidated. In his own words, "I turned my face from war's ground and somehow became cursed by

the Gods." Nor is Dax's universe a highly structured one. His aimless wandering, "... following the tracery of ancient earth's ribs," leads him to nameless lands in various dimensions, all of which lends an abstract sensation to the entire series of adventures. This is extremely effective in contributing to the cosmic atmosphere of these tales, further enhanced by the magnificently ethereal artistry of Maroto.

Indeed, such a persuasive mood of doom and despair has seldom been so graphically conveyed. Around Dax, the weather seems perpetually cloudy, with the sun but a faint glimmer in memory. This concept of the eternal nightmare which plagues a Conan-esque character is thus skillfully developed to a climax. The saga of Dax is a valuable contribution to the body of fantastic literature.

SCROLLS by L SPRAGUE de CAMP

H P Lovecraft & Willis Conover: *LOVECRAFT AT LAST*, Arlington VA: Carrollton Clark, 1975, xxii + 272 pp; \$19.75.

During H P Lovecraft's last year, he corresponded with young Willis Conover in New York. Conover, who later became a U S civil servant and an authority on the history of jazz, kept HPL's letters and copies of his own. In this book, he has published much of the contents of these letters in unusual form. He has broken them up into sentences and paragraphs and alternated snippets from his own letters with those of his pen pal, to give the impression of a coherent conversation.

This book is not only of interest to all Lovecraftians but also a magnificent piece of bookmaking: fine paper, large type, wide margins, and the use of some red and blue ink: the latter, for instance, in facsimiles of Lovecraft's handwriting. Whether the contents justify so extravagant a format and so costly a product is a debatable question, which prospective buyers will have to decide for themselves. Hard-core Lovecraftians will certainly want the book if they can afford it. As for others -- well, I hope for Conover's sake that enough will be beguiled. [Even at this price, though, the book is a fantastic bargain for the reader, in view of its very high production costs.]

As some critics have noted, the Lovecraft appearing in Conover's pages is more attractive than that of my *LOVECRAFT: A BIOGRAPHY*. The reason is simple. In the last year of his life, Lovecraft had shed most of his more eccentric habits, poses, and prejudices. So we see him pretty much at his best. My book, which also covers his spoiled childhood, maladjusted adolescence, and psychoneurotic young manhood, is bound to give a less pleasant over-all effect.

Philip José Farmer: *MADRON OF ANCIENT OPAR*, NY: DAW Books, 1974, 224 pp; \$1.25.

This is a pastiche on Burroughs, laid in the lost city of Opar in the African state or region of Tanzania. Farmer has simply gone back 12,000 years (in other words, to about Conan's time) and told a yarn of a brawny young hero who sets out to compete in the sanguinary Games of the city of Khokarsa. If he wins, he weds the princess and becomes emperor. If not, he is sworded to death, eaten by crocodiles, or otherwise picturesquely disposed of. The story ends on a cliff-hanger, obviously in hopes of a sequel. Not bad, although it has the basically juvenile appeal (with a dash of modern sexual libertarianism) of the Burroughs stories on which it is modeled.

Roland Green: *WANDOR'S JOURNEY*, NY: Avon Books, 1975, 188 pp; \$0.95.

The invincible Bertan Wandor continues his struggle to preserve the feudal realm of King Mond against the plots of despicable Duke Cragor. Wandor is ably seconded by his flame-haired mate, Gyana, and rises to viceroy. *WANDOR'S VOYAGE* is promised. Standard S&S but pretty good.

Gardner F Fox: *KYRIK: WARLOCK, WARRIOR*, NY: Leisure Books, 1975, 153 pp; \$0.95.

The creator of Kothar gives us Kyrik, a mighty barbarian swordsman of a former geological era. Kyrik battles a demon god, rides a pterosaur, dallies with scrutable females, and at the end declines a kingship in favor of wandering the earth with a tribe of quasi-Gypsies. Same comment as the preceding.

BLUNDERS

being, this time around, a column of editorial miscellany....



Stuart Shiffman wrote to say that while he had so done the contentspageillo of a street railway centaur, in Amra v2#63, his name was not Stuart David Schiff, who is an entirely different person and who puts out the excellent fanzine *Whispers*. We've asked Schiff to correct matters by drawing a centaur or two, but . . .

The November 1974 issue of *Iron Man*, a weight-lifting and body-building magazine, contains an article, "Super Heroes of Fiction" by Dave Willoughby, which discusses some large & muscular heroes from fantasy and related fiction as inspiration for potential trainee to take up body-building. Mentioned are Tarran, John Carter, Polaris, Avar, Conan (of course), Jongor, Thongor, and others. The writer here complains of some feats of strength which are simply ridiculous, such as Hemmingway's description of an arm/wrist wrestling contest that lasted 24 hours (3 minutes is a more reasonable figure) or Steinbeck's description of a man crushing the closed fist of an ex-boxer.

J B Post has brought to our attention the 1974 edition of *AMERICAN LIBRARY DIRECTORY*, which includes an entry for: ARKHAM - 13,039. Area code 617. 4C- MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, The Quadrangle, 01938. Tel 739-1433. Founded 1911. Dir Howard Phillips. Libn Robert Block. Curator of Rare Bks Robert E Howard. Vols 36,732. Bd per 421. Micro hldgs: cds 225, films 78. Sal \$14,750. Student assts \$7691. Non-prof \$9715. Bks (1970-71) \$9873. Per \$1400. Bd \$736. Enr 290. Special Subjects: Art, Humanities, Religion. Special Collections: Bound manuscripts & First Editions of Metaphysical & Esoteric Sciences, Mythology, History of Witchcraft. Micro Rs (P Cd) The entry is missing from the 1975 edition; perhaps the Authorities are trying to suppress the facts again?

SSgt Edward P Berglund, 472-46-7335, is assembling a Hyborian bibliography/glossary of all material, published or not, completed or projected, that he can find or find reference to. He has access to Amra, *The Howard Collector*, *Cross Plains*, *Fantasy Crossroads*, the Marvel comics, and the Conan hard-cover and paperback books; he needs info on any other material on Robert E Howard's Hyborean age or peripheral to it. Contact him (not us) at 8th ITT HqCo, HqBn, 2dMarDiv RMP, Camp Lejeune NC 28542.

We regret to announce that the British freighter *Amra* was rammed by a Norwegian ship in the harbor at Kobe, Japan in June of this year. The crew was rescued by a tugboat. The Danish steamer of the same name, happily, escaped being nailed by Count von Lückner about 60 years earlier.

Janet Brown, of Citadel Sweetbasil, 19407 Dorothy, Rocky River OH 44116, remarks that considering the behavior of the lawmen that Ed Price observed when he went to visit REN, and assuming that less law-abiding persons were Much Worse, perhaps Howard's behavior -- stalking a bush with a pistol -- was more cautious than aberrated. She further remarks that it's a surprise to see Meschko's review of *LOVECRAFT: A BIOGRAPHY*, since every other reviewer seems (1) to hate HPL and to think de Camp was too lenient, or (2) to be an HPL fan and to think de Camp was too harsh.

L Sprague de Camp, while promising to try to benefit from Mr Hoffman's existential analysis of Conan ('way back in Amra v2#61), wants to point out that Howard's original Conan stories were by no means lacking in the theme of the good gods, backing the hero, versus the bad ones who oppose him, and cites the intervention of Mitra in "The Black Colossus", and that by Epimetreus in "The Phoenix on the Sword", together with a few vaguer hints elsewhere.

The editors of this magazine wish to remind all of you who change lairs: tell us!!!! Telling us must include both old and new addresses and zip codes!! !! !!

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